

BOOK REVIEW

MESQUITE: ITS BIOLOGY IN TWO DESERT SCRUB ECOSYSTEMS, edited by B. B. Simpson, with pp. 250. New York, Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, Inc., 1977. \$22,00.

Scientific investigation into the problems concerning our veld takes rather a back seat in South Africa. Veld research often entails long-term projects which are avoided by the average researcher and student.

Is the presence of the mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.) an asset to the arid veld types of South Africa and South West Africa or can it be considered an introduced pest and a danger to the carrying capacity of the veld? It was introduced into Southern Africa many years ago but one hears very little about it in the conference room or in literature.

Mesquite: Its Biology in Two Desert Scrub Ecosystems is a very welcome American contribution to the literature on veld ecology that we in South Africa can also make good use of. The book covers tremendous ground in research by teams of researchers. Topics studied and reported on include: Phenology, morphology and physiology of mesquite; *Prosopis* leaves, flowers and fruits as a resource for insects and invertebrates; Its food, medicinal cosmetic, recreational, fuel and other values; The spread of mesquite; Factors involved in its spread; Control of mesquite. There is also an annotated key to the species of the world of the genus *Prosopis*.

We in South Africa can probably not afford research on as large a scale as the Americans and must therefore make good use of this very comprehensive publication.

The text is adequately supported with illustrations, graphs, maps and photographs. It is a neat, wellbound book comprising 250 pages and measuring 240 × 160 mm. The reader is supplied with a very comprehensive and impressive reference list. The book has an adequate subject index as well as an index of scientific names. It will appeal to the undergraduate and the post-graduate student as well as the research worker.

May this book help to stimulate more interest in our South African veld and ecology and the influence of modern man on its destiny.

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